



ALAMEDA COUNTY COVID-19 HEALTH EMERGENCY

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA ★ CALIFORNIA

Office of Emergency Services
4985 Broder Blvd, Dublin, CA 94568

Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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California’s Local Public Health Officials Receive Prestigious State Award for Pandemic Response; Call for Additional Investments to Build the Public Health Workforce Pipeline

SACRAMENTO, CA — California’s public health officials have been awarded the prestigious Beverlee A. Myers Award for Excellence in Public Health for 2021 by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). CDPH will present the award to the Presidents that served the County Health Executives Association of California (CHEAC) and the California Conference of Local Health Officers (CCLHO), representing public health executives and health officers during its annual PHAME Awards Ceremony today at 1 PM.

“On behalf of California’s local health department directors, we thank the California Department of Public Health for recognizing the heroic and lifesaving work of public health officials and our entire departments since early 2020,” said **Colleen Chawla, then President of CHEAC and current Director of the Alameda County Health Care Services Agency**. “The Beverlee A. Myers Award recognizes the sacrifices that so many of my friends and colleagues made as local health department leaders and equally belongs with the thousands of public health workers who support us in keeping our communities healthy and serve as shining examples of their commitment to public service.”

“As we navigate through one of the most challenging moments in recent history, the State’s recognition of our work gives us renewed strength and inspiration. We remain committed to advancing public health initiatives with a sharp focus on health equity, authentic community partnerships, and fostering safe and healthy communities for all residents.,” added **Chawla**.

“California’s local public health officials worked around the clock for the past two years to protect communities and vulnerable Californians from falling ill and dying from COVID-19,” said **Michelle Gibbons, Executive Director of the County Health Executives Association of California**. “Local Public Health Heroes continue to lead the way on pandemic emergency response initiatives to save lives, provide accurate, science-based information to communities, and keep communities’ vaccines up to date so California can keep businesses and schools safely open and our economy recovering.”

Through the California Can’t Wait (#CACantWait) Coalition, CHEAC is co-leading efforts to rebuild our local public health workforce and infrastructure after disinvestment over the past decade and more left California underprepared to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. #CACantWait succeeded in advancing

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their budget proposal to reinvest in state and local public health, securing a \$300M annual budget investment as part of Governor Newsom’s FY 22-23 January proposed state budget. The Coalition is also calling on the Governor and State Legislature to invest in their Public Health Readiness and Opportunity (#PublicHERO) Initiative to build a pipeline of future public health workers to address existing and emerging public health threats.

“California relies heavily on a highly skilled, educated and competent workforce to protect us from existing and emerging public health threats that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic,” added **Gibbons**. “We must also invest in workforce retention, recruitment, education, and training to ensure California is prepared to address rising rates of STDs and STIs, diabetes, tuberculosis, syphilis, and other chronic diseases.”

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The Beverlee A. Myers Award for Excellence in Public Health recognizes the contributions of public health and health care services professionals in improving the health status of Californians. Established in 1993 in honor of the late Beverlee A. Myers, the award reflects the leadership and dedication to all aspects of public health improvement exemplified throughout her 25-year career, including her service as director of the California Department of Health Services from 1978 to 1983.

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